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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Identical letters dated 9 January 2009 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Yesterday, 8 January 2009, the United Nations Security Council took an important step towards upholding its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security vis-à-vis the question of Palestine. After nearly two weeks of incessant calls upon the Council to act to address the crisis and suffering being endured by the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, and after a long series of intensive meetings and consultations, including at the Ministerial level, the Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009), which, among many important provisions, calls in the immediate stage for "an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire" and "the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel and medical treatment".

At this stage, it is imperative that the Security Council and all concerned parties exert the necessary efforts and work to follow up the effective implementation of this resolution to bring an end to all military activities and violence, to address the serious humanitarian and economic needs of the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, who have for too long been under Israel's inhumane siege, and to help the parties return from the precipice to which this crisis has brought us and back to the path of peace. For its part, the Palestinian leadership affirms its commitment to uphold its responsibilities in this regard in order to address most effectively and rapidly the many serious and urgent issues facing the Palestinian people at this difficult time.

Regrettably, as we await the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), the Israeli military onslaught against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip continues, with more and more civilians being killed and injured by the occupying forces and greater destruction being wreaked on the already debilitated Gaza Strip; the humanitarian situation remains grave. As of today, more than 800 Palestinians have been killed by the occupying forces, including at least 260 children, and more than 3,300 Palestinians have been injured, including more than 1,000 children.

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Such horrific figures underscore the extreme gravity of the situation that continues to be faced by Palestinian children and their families, with some families being killed in their entirety and some families completely buried in homes, struck by missiles and artillery that have collapsed upon them. Undoubtedly, the trauma, suffering and terror being inflicted on this civilian population will have vast short- and long-term consequences on the well-being and stability of those children and their families. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Children's Fund have warned of the exacerbation of the critical humanitarian situation and of the great risk posed to civilian life, particularly the lives of children and other vulnerable segments of the population, as Israel's military campaign in Gaza rages on.

In this regard, even those who have been killed and wounded have not been given the dignity or emergency treatment needed, owing to the occupying Power's hampering of rescue efforts. As report by international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, rescue workers continue to be subjected to unacceptable delays or obstruction of access by the Israeli occupying forces, impeding efforts to reach the victims of the military attacks. In one shocking incident, Red Cross and Red Crescent workers, who had to wait for four days for permission to undertake a rescue effort of shelled homes in Gaza City, found 4 small children next to their dead mothers in one home and found 1 man alive in the rubble of another home alongside 12 dead civilians. The children, nearly starved and completely traumatized, were too weak to stand on their own. Due to the inability of ambulances to reach them, the children and other wounded found in the area had to be transported by carts to ambulances waiting to provide them with emergency medical care, which is already scarce in Gaza since the health services there are, according to the World Health Organization, "on the point of collapse".

Israel continues to refuse requests by rescue workers to access destroyed homes and buildings where dead and wounded civilians are reported to be. This, among many other deplorable actions being committed by the occupying Power against the Palestinian civilian population, constitutes a grave violation of Israel's obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian law and of human rights law. Such violations must be vehemently condemned, and the international community must continue to demand that Israel abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention and all other relevant provisions of international law and should act to hold Israel accountable for the war crimes it is perpetrating against the Palestinian people. In this regard, we welcome the call by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for an independent investigation of the crimes committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in Gaza.

In closing, as this tragic crisis regrettably continues, we reiterate our call for all efforts to be made to implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and, in this connection, express our strong hope that current diplomatic initiatives, including the Egyptian initiative and the other international and regional efforts that are under way, will come to fruition to bring an end to the disastrous situation in Gaza and bring relief for the Palestinian civilian population. Moreover, we stress the urgency in this regard of continued efforts by the international community and relevant United Nations organs and specialized agencies to effectively address the many political, humanitarian, socio-economic and security ramifications of this crisis.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 329 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 6 January 2009 (A/ES-10/433-S/2009/8), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. (As all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter.)

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer